

Pat Bauer

State Representative • District 6

Spring, 2000

Dear Friend,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and increased benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, as chairman of the State Budget Committee, I will be travelling throughout the state meeting with citizens. This will help us make better decisions about spending our state tax dollars.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have any questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,



How To Reach
Representative

Pat Bauer

**Serving the
South Bend Area**

**LEGISLATIVE
OFFICE**

200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

1-800-382-9842

R6@ai.org

Health care is primary use of tobacco settlement

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will go to health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

Seniors also will see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.



Rep. Bauer debates legislation on the House floor.

Helping working men and women

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.



Rep. Bauer discusses legislation with Rep. Bill Cochran.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million the next two years.

Research and Development

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about improving efforts to stop a “brain drain” of young people from our state that started because we did not have the quality high-tech jobs that would convince them to stay. New legislation will encourage companies already working in Research and Development to expand their efforts while making Indiana more competitive in attracting new firms to our state. These are the kinds of jobs that can convince our college graduates to stay in the state after getting out of school.

Medicaid eligibility definition adjusted

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four-year disability.

With so many advances in health care, there is a treatment for almost every type of ailment. Medicaid was designed to help needy individuals, but the current system excludes so many people from qualifying for the aid that most other states would offer them.

This is not an attempt to provide free health care to all Hoosiers. It simply modifies the restrictions just enough so that a few more deserving individuals are able to qualify.

School Safety

Several bills passed this session deal with school safety. School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential.

State web site an information gateway

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items.

The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.



A screen shot of my legislative homepage.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R6 and explore various items related to the legislature and our district.

State Phone Numbers

State Information	1-800-457-8283
Governor's Office	317-232-4567
Secretary of State	317-232-6531
Medicaid	317-233-4455
Attorney General Consumer Protection . . .	1-800-382-5516

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Indiana House of
Representatives

Rep. Pat Bauer

200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786
1-800-382-9842



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